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New current meter at Stevens will feed data into NOAA's real-time information system to allow ships to navigate more safely in New York harbor

NOAA is using data from a new current meter in New York harbor, operated by one of its academic partners, New Jersey's Stevens Institute of Technology, to provide enhanced real-time information to mariners travelling through the nation's second busiest port.

The Stevens current meter measures the direction, speed, and volume of ocean currents in the harbor's navigation channels, north of the Narrows between Brooklyn and Staten Island. Its data will be used in NOAA's Physical Oceanographic Real-Time System (PORTS®) system, which delivers real-time environmental observations, forecasts and other geospatial information to mariners in 21 major U.S. harbors. The system makes maritime commerce more safe and efficient by giving ship captains instant measurements of the water levels and temperatures, and the direction and speed of the current and wind as they come in and out of port.

Stevens is a partner in the NOAA-led U.S. Integrated Ocean Observing System (IOOS®), and is the first academic institution that is part of IOOS to have its research data incorporated into the NOAA real-time PORTS program.

"This new sensor will provide crucial current information halfway between the Verrazano Narrows Bridge and Manhattan, the primary navigation route into New York and New Jersey ports. It's a great addition to PORTS," said Richard Edwing, director of NOAA's Center for Operational Oceanographic Products and Services. "This collaboration between Stevens and NOAA gives us access to previously untapped data to help us address marine commerce and other coastal issues. It also lays the groundwork for future federal-regional collaborations."

By providing real-time tide, current, and other information, NOAA's PORTS program helps reduce the chances for accidents. Also, enhanced marine information can increase the amount of cargo moved through a port and harbor by enabling mariners to safely use every inch of dredged channel depth.

"This is how the national IOOS network – with federal, regional, academic, and private sector partnerships – is bringing more data and information to the table from more sources than the government has had access to before," said Zdenka Willis, U.S. IOOS program director. "In these tough economic times, IOOS is really helping us do more for our nation at lower cost."

IOOS brings together timely, reliable, and accurate data and information decision makers need to take action to improve safety, enhance the economy and protect the environment. These data provide a larger picture of the interaction between the ocean and global climate systems and advance our understanding of potential climate change impacts on our marine ecosystems and coastal communities.

NOAA's mission is to understand and predict changes in the Earth's environment, from the depths of the ocean to the surface of the sun, and to conserve and manage our coastal and marine resources. Join us on Facebook, Twitter and our other social media channels.